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ABSTRACT

A community impact study for Kalamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC) was conducted to generate data for institutional planning, management, and evaluation. Specifically, the study involved learning how well KVCC was achieving its stated goals relative to career advancement, personal development, and recreational enjoyment; determining general community awareness of and satisfaction with college programs and services; assessing general community perceptions of unmet educational needs; and establishing an information base for measuring future impact changes. The college's Program Development Services Office assumed responsibility for the study and established an Advisory Committee of community representatives to provide guidance. The college President and cabinet worked closely with study developers. Six area populations were identified as target groups: registered voters, employers, educators from other institutions, civic leaders, social agency directors, and KVCC faculty and staff. A variety of survey procedures were used: group interviews, questionnaires designed for each population, and certain common questions for every respondent. Findings, problems encountered in the study design and procedures, and administrative use of the findings are reviewed in the report. (TR)

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Community Impact Study

A Case Study

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JC 780 291

KALAMAZOO VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

COMMUNITY IMPACT STUDY

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- A CASE STUDY -

For more information:

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March 10, 1978

KALAMAZOO VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

COMMUNITY IMPACT STUDY

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- A CASE STUDY -

HISTORY AND MISSION

By vote of the electorate, Kalamazoo Valley Community College was established on 1 August 1966 and two years later, the 1,500 members of the first class enrolled. The College now serves over 14,000 students annually in its $13 million physical plant on a 187-acre campus.

It currently offers over 55 instructional programs, mostly in vocational and technical education. KVCC often joins the three other institutions of higher education in the Kalamazoo area - Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo College and Nazareth College - in sharing resources and offering joint programs to provide the best possible services for students, faculty and the community.

Employers from a diverse industrial and commercial base provide the economic base for the 210,000 residents of the College District. Among the largest employers are the Upjohn Company, whose world-wide headquarters is in Kalamazoo, Fisher Body Division of General Motors, Brown Company and Eaton Corporation Transmission Division. Approximately 400 other manufacturers and processors also support the local economy.

In 1978, as KVCC approached its tenth anniversary, the need to evaluate its policies, programs and services became apparent to administrators, and community impact information was viewed as a reliable source of data to enhance institutional planning, management and evaluation. Specifically, they wanted:

- To learn how well KVCC was achieving its stated goal of imparting the knowledge and skills necessary for career advancement, personal development and recreational enjoyment.

- To determine general community awareness of and satisfaction with College programs and services.
- To assess general community perceptions of unmet educational needs.
- To develop procedures for an impact study, and to establish an information base for measuring future changes in impact.

Moreover, the following set of circumstances indicated the need for more systematic collection and interpretation of comprehensive and accurate impact information:

1. A leveling-off in enrollments after rapid increases in the College's early years, a decline in the proportion of full-time students from 50 to 25 percent and a significant and steady decrease in average credits per student.
2. The effect of changing levels of employment on enrollment.
3. The need of local employers for more programs and services adapted to changing technologies and the increased expectation of employers that new employees demonstrate more job-related skills.
4. The effect of inflation and energy limitations.
5. Financial resources that increase less rapidly than the costs of goods and services.
6. A decline in state aid.
7. The failure of the electorate to approve a request for an increase in the millage rate to support the College's operating fund.
8. More comprehensive and detailed reporting requirements of state and federal agencies.

Originally, KVCC intended to conduct the Community Impact Study under an overall College Outcomes project, funded under a Title III grant from the U.S. Office of Education. However, when the scope and complexities of the impact study became apparent, the College decided that the study should be done as a separate activity under the same grant. The College President and his Cabinet provided full support for the study and played a major role in its design and implementation. The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), based upon special interest in measurement of educational outcomes, expressed interest in the study and became a full partner in its implementation and conduct.

KVCC's ORGANIZATION FOR ITS COMMUNITY IMPACT STUDY

The Program Development Services Office (PDS) of KVCC was assigned overall responsibility for the study. It was decided to establish an Advisory Committee composed of community representatives to provide overall guidance for the study. The PDS Office then compiled a list of representatives from business, government, education, social agencies, labor and industry to serve as a pool from which to develop the Advisory Committee.

The President and his Cabinet then invited 17 individuals to serve on the Advisory Committee which included a College trustee, representative superintendents of local school districts, members of local school boards, the Executive Secretary of the Kalamazoo Foundation, bank officials, the mayors of the two largest cities in the College's District, the President of the Downtown Kalamazoo Association, the Director of the Upjohn Institute for Employment Research and an attorney. This group provided advice relative to the scope of the study, provided valuable suggestions related to development of questionnaires and sampling techniques and helped to identify the civic leader target population.

The Dean of Program Development Services and two research associates were the key personnel in implementing the study plan. The following populations from within the College District were identified and to be used as target groups for the study:

Registered voters

Employers

Educators

Social agency directors

Civic leaders

KVCC faculty and staff

The project staff also conducted a search of KVCC's institutional records to provide additional impact information.

SURVEY PROCEDURES

A variety of procedures were used in surveying the study populations. Some were involved in group interviews and each participant independently completed a questionnaire specifically designed for the population which he represented. Certain common questions were included on all questionnaires. Following is a brief presentation of the procedures used in surveying the populations.

Perceptions of College Role Fulfillment

On questionnaires used with all six populations, three "common" or "core" questions were included. Two dealt with perceptions of College performance, and a third with perceptions relative to unmet community educational needs.

Overall, respondents expressed extremely positive reaction to the manner in which the College is achieving its goals and serving the greater Kalamazoo area.

The great majority of respondents in all populations were unable to identify educational needs which KVCC should be attempting to meet but is not meeting at the present time.

Following is a sample question used in this aspect of the survey together with a summary of responses to it.

Question...

The overall purpose of KVCC is to provide educational programs and services as needed by the residents of the Greater Kalamazoo Community beyond the high school level. The education and training provided by KVCC are intended to help students obtain knowledge and skills needed for educational and occupational career advancement, personal development and recreational development.

Given this overall purpose of KVCC, how well do you feel KVCC is achieving this goal?

1) ☐ Very poor job
2) ☐ Less than satisfactory job
3) ☐ Satisfactory job
4) ☐ More than satisfactory job
5) ☐ Excellent job

Summary of Responses

Response	Percent of Responses
Very poor job	0
Less than satisfactory job	3.8
Satisfactory job	30.8
More than satisfactory job	46.6
Excellent job	18.8
	100.0

Responses to this "core" question were similar among all populations surveyed. The responses it produced are being utilized in addressing accountability issues, in improving public relations and in revitalizing curriculum advisory committees.

Registered Voters

In determining the most feasible source of data for selecting the sample of College District residents to include in the study, consideration was given to use of the lists of registered voters, telephone directory and city directories. The project team selected the lists of registered voters for three reasons:

(1) The population formed by the registration lists would conform to the College's District, since both were defined by school districts.

(2) Those persons who were eligible to vote on KVCC millage questions and trustee elections would constitute the target population for the survey.

(3) The lists could provide a sample that would most accurately represent the total College District population.

A stratified sample of 2,001 persons, or 1.6 percent of the population, was drawn proportionally from the 122,270 voters registered in the ten school districts of the College District. The project team encountered two problems in its survey of registered voters. The first problem was the great amount of time required to develop the sample inasmuch as it was a hand operation using ten different lists maintained at ten different locations. The second problem was the unexpected high return of questionnaires as undeliverable, resulting in reduction of the sample to 1,555. Postal Service returned 446 of the

questionnaires as undeliverable, undoubtedly a reflection of the mobility of the local population. In a non-election year, this proportion would have probably been even higher. Approximately 25 percent of those who received questionnaires, or slightly less than 400 registered voters, returned them. Following is a sample question used in this survey, together with a summary of responses to it.

Question...

How have you learned about the educational courses, programs, services and facilities offered by KVCC? Check (✓) any that apply.

- ☐ This questionnaire
- ☐ KVCC faculty and staff
- ☐ KVCC students and former students
- ☐ Radio
- ☐ Newspapers
- ☐ Television
- ☐ Newsletters
- ☐ Friends and relatives
- ☐ People you work with
- ☐ Other major sources (Please specify)

Summary of Responses

Response	Percent of Responses
This questionnaire	10.7
KVCC faculty and staff	8.0
KVCC students and former students	21.6
Radio	5.6

Newspapers	20.1
Television	2.7
Newsletters	5.8
Friends and relatives	15.6
People you work with	10.0
Other	0.0

Note: Total Responses = 1,001

These responses provided the College with valuable data relative to the effectiveness of various sources of information available to the community. This enabled the College to refine some of its activities and to develop certain new ones. Specifically, the College is implementing a series of changes in its admissions and recruiting techniques, is developing printed promotional materials for selected target populations and is reviewing its use of the media.

KVCC Faculty and Staff

With the exception of students, all full-time and part-time employees at KVCC were surveyed. This resulted in a list of 407 names and addresses procured from the Business Office.

One hundred and ninety-six usable questionnaires were returned, for a return rate of 49 percent. Seven employees had changed their address without notifying the Business Office and consequently, were not included in the study.

Because of the need for confidentiality, this survey was handled entirely by NCHEMS, which addressed a cover letter and return envelopes on its own stationery. Following is a sample question used in this survey, together with a summary of responses to it.

Question...

As a faculty or staff member of KVCC, have you given any of your time to community service activities such as consulting, art exhibits, lectures or seminars for the public?

1) ☐ Yes

2) ☐ No

Summary of Responses

Response	Percent of Responses
Yes	53
No	47

The percent of respondents indicated that they had given time to community service activities and helped to demonstrate the extent of KVCC faculty and staff community involvement.

Employers

The project team conducted a pilot study of a sample of employers listed in the telephone directory yellow pages. The 14 percent response rate was extremely low and was attributed, in part, to the fact that cover letters were addressed as "Dear Employer" rather than to an individual recipient.

For the actual survey, the population was defined as all employers listed in the Kalamazoo County Chamber of Commerce Membership Directory, Kalamazoo Area Directory of Manufacturers and Processors and the KVCC Placement Office list of employers. These provided the name and title of the chief administrator of each organization or, in the case of KVCC's placement list, of an individual who had prior contact with the College. Cover letters were then addressed to each of these persons and signed by the College President. A return rate of 54.5 percent, or 193 of the 355 employers sampled, was obtained.

Following is a sample question used in this survey, together with a summary of responses to it.

Question...

How would you rate the quality of training these employees received at KVCC?

1) ☐ Poor

2) ☐ Fair

3) ☐ Good

4) ☐ Excellent

Comments: _____

_____

_____

Summary of Responses

Response	Percent of Responses
Poor	1.2
Fair	6.1
Good	67.1
Excellent	25.6

The quality of training received by these employees indicated, in a very positive manner, that the College's programs were viable, realistic and meeting the needs of area employers served by the College.

Educators

Educators employed by other area institutions were included as a target population because of their knowledge about the general population and the purposes, services and impact of KVCC. This population was defined as all full-time professional staff employed by each school district and the three

postsecondary institutions in the KVCC service area. From lists provided by the school districts and colleges, a 25 percent random sample was drawn. In addition, all superintendents, principals, presidents, vice-presidents and deans were automatically included in the sample. Three hundred and ninety-eight, or 42.6 percent of the 935 questionnaires mailed, were returned. Following is a sample question used in this survey, together with a summary of responses to it.

Question...

Could KVCC be more responsive in helping you?

1) ☐ Yes

2) ☐ No

If yes, in what ways? _____

_____

_____

Summary of Responses

Response	Percent of Participants Selecting this Response
Yes	20.0
No	80.0

The ways in which KVCC could be more responsive in helping educators with their work responsibilities were summarized and used in refining college services.

Social Agency Directors

The project team selected social agency directors as a target population because it appeared to be a specific and distinct population which had a broad range of College contacts and relationships.

The President's office obtained the names and addresses of directors of agencies such as the YMCA, Red Cross and Vocational Rehabilitation centers. The Program Development Services staff and the President then defined the target population. A sample of 25 was selected, and 16 usable questionnaires were returned. Respondents were also invited to participate in a group interview at KVCC and were requested to bring their questionnaires with them to the meeting as a "ticket" of admission to a breakfast or luncheon. After consideration of several formats, it was decided to have the College President serve as the discussion leader for the group interviews. The results of the questionnaires were immediately tabulated and served as a "take-off" point for the group interviews. Those who could not attend were asked to return their questionnaire by mail.

Civic Leaders

The project team selected civic leaders as a target population because of their intimate knowledge of the community and the programs and services provided by KVCC. From lists provided by the Chamber of Commerce and the project Advisory Committee, the project team, the President and appropriate College administrators selected representatives of local governments, labor organizations, religious groups, business, industry and community service organizations for this sample.

Forty-five, or 64.3 percent, of those sampled returned their questionnaires. As in the case of social agency directors, civic leaders also were invited by the President to group interviews at the College. Thirty-five of the 45 respondents participated.

Originally, the project team had intended to hold one follow-up discussion at the College for all respondents in the social agency director and civic leader populations. However, as the study progressed, the Advisory Committee

and the project team decided to hold separate interviews for the social agency directors and to conduct four small group interviews for civic leaders.

The same format was followed for civic leaders as with social agency directors. Besides enabling the project team to discover how the most influential citizens in the community perceived the impact of KVCC, the group interviews gave those citizens an opportunity to learn firsthand about the College, its programs and services. All comments were recorded and transcribed. After the interviews, the project team contacted some participants to explore their reactions in more detail.

COMMENTS ON PROCEDURES

After the KVCC project team had developed the initial drafts of the survey instruments, the President's Cabinet, the Advisory Committee and NCHEMS personnel reviewed and made appropriate revisions in the instruments. However, the eighteen months consumed by this process proved to be much too long. The extensive time involved was in large measure due to changes in personnel among both KVCC and NCHEMS staff, particularly the fact that there were three different project leaders during the eighteen months.

Another problem developed relative to the real usefulness of some data. A list of variables was developed from a review of guidelines for conducting economic impact studies described by Caffrey and Isaacs (1971). This list was then organized by impact area (e.g., education, recreation, economics), reduced to include only data that would be easily collected, and used to guide the search of the College's records. However, because user needs had not been clearly defined before the study began, the project team discovered that it had not produced certain needed information.

The project team also discovered it should have developed procedures for a more extensive study of the sample of registered voters. Though valuable information was obtained from this population, researchers found a need for the kind of details that only personal or telephone interviews provide.

FINDINGS

Perceptions of College Role Fulfillment: For all study populations, respondents perceived College performance very positively. Over 96 percent of the respondents believe the College is achieving its goals in a satisfactory or more than satisfactory manner while only 2.4 percent believe the contrary. Over 96 percent of the respondents were satisfied or more than satisfied with the way in which "KVCC is serving the Greater Kalamazoo community". For both of these questions, civic leaders, social agency directors and KVCC faculty and staff gave KVCC the highest ratings. Educators, employers and registered voters, although still extremely satisfied with College performance, gave slightly lower ratings.

In response to the question, "Are there educational needs in the Greater Kalamazoo community that you feel KVCC should be attempting to meet, but is not meeting at the present time?", the majority of respondents in all populations answered "No". KVCC faculty and staff and local educators, however, were more likely than the other populations to respond affirmatively. The needs each population cited, generally reflected its own interests. KVCC faculty and staff mentioned most often, new courses and programs, and services for minorities, the disadvantaged and the elderly.

Impact of KVCC Programs: Since KVCC first offered classes in 1968, it has served over 60,000 persons. During the fiscal year ending 30 June 1977, headcount enrollment totaled 14,776, and registered credit hours 95,020.

Thirty-seven percent of the respondents in the registered voter survey indicated that they, or a member of their household, had enrolled in a program or course at the College during the past five years. Less than two percent were dissatisfied with their experience at the College.

Fifty-six percent of the employers indicated they currently employ persons who have taken courses at KVCC. Of these employers, over one-half stated the courses taken by their employees were related to their jobs. Ninety-three percent of the employers rated the quality of training received by their employees at KVCC as either "good" or "excellent". One-half of the social agency directors who responded indicated their agency has used College courses for both their employees and clientele.

From these findings, the project team concluded the impact of KVCC educational programs has been extensive and positive.

Impact of KVCC Services and Facilities: During 1976, College facilities were used by over 17,400 persons for 180 community gatherings. Groups served included youth organizations, local government, service organizations, local businesses, social clubs and other educational institutions.

Respondents to the registered voters survey were most likely to be aware of and use the cafeteria, library and athletic facilities. Less than ten percent were dissatisfied with College facilities and services.

Employers were most aware of and likely to use athletic facilities and job placement services, or to participate in conferences, seminars and workshops. They were quite satisfied with KVCC performance in these areas. The attitudes of social agency directors were similar to those of employers.

Educators used KVCC consultant services most frequently and were satisfied 99 percent of the time. They also used and were satisfied with the cafeteria and meeting rooms. Many survey respondents from all populations expressed their satisfaction with KVCC services and facilities in written comments.

Economic Impact of the College: Since 1967, capital expenditures have totaled over $12.5 million. Operating expenditures for the 1976-77 fiscal year exceeded $6.7 million. Sources of College revenue include nearly $3 million in state funds that the College injects into the local economy. The survey of KVCC faculty and staff revealed that College employees spend $3.6 million in the Kalamazoo community. Including salaries and wages, the College estimates expenditures for local goods and services total nearly $6 million annually. Revenues gained for the community far surpass the community's financial support of the College. Thus the economic contribution of KVCC has been substantial.

USE OF FINDINGS

KVCC administrators have used the written comments of respondents as well as the tabulated data to review the effectiveness of existing programs and services and to plan new ones. To use this information most effectively, it has been used with various institutional groups, with trustees, with legislators and with members of the community.

Student services personnel have used the findings to improve recruiting techniques. The written comments of respondents have been used to determine what new counseling, placement and financial services are needed as well as to evaluate existing services.

The study has at least indirectly affected most administrators, since its findings have been used in determining budgets and modifying facilities and services. The findings have enabled KVCC personnel to determine how well the public understands the mission and goals of the College.

Additionally, data have been used specifically to aid in establishing annual public relations objectives, communicating KVCC impact to legislators, revitalization of program advisory committees, focusing on further cooperation

and coordination with the three other institutions of higher education in the Kalamazoo area, and establishment of more effective data sources for institutional management studies. Finally, data have been used in curriculum review and in specific development of labor studies and pre-retirement programs.

KVCC administrators believe that the Community Impact Study has been extremely valuable. Through it, they have systematically examined community attitudes toward and use of the College. The information the study has produced has enabled them to assess the extent to which the College is meeting the educational needs of the community and to plan wisely. Equally as important, the study has enhanced the community's understanding of the College.

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